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Route To:

Subject: Work Capacity Test Guidelines for 2004

To: Regional Foresters, Station Directors, Area Director, IITF Director, Job Corps,  
and WO Staff

This memorandum clarifies direction about the Health Screening Questionnaire (HSQ) and our agreements with the National Federation of Federal Employees for fiscal year 2004 Fire Season. The enclosed Work Capacity Test (WCT) Implementation Guide and forms listed at: [http://www.fs.fed.us/fire/safety/wct/wct\\_index.html](http://www.fs.fed.us/fire/safety/wct/wct_index.html) are to be used for complying with the agreed upon screening procedures.

Before any current or prospective employee either begins physical training in preparation for the WCT or actually takes any level of the WCT, they must complete a HSQ and submit it to the Servicing Human Resource Office (SHRO). The HSQ has been approved for distribution to the public by the Office of Management and Budget and will be used to initially screen the health of all Permanent, Temporary, and Administratively Determined (AD) employees. The following items outline our agreements and guidance on the subjects listed:

**1. Option to require physical examination.** Regions will provide the HSQ shown on the above website to all Permanent, Temporary, and AD employees who are to be engaged in fire operations. The HSQ will be reviewed by the local SHRO. The designated human resource specialist will determine whether the person meets the criteria (identified by the American Heart Association) to begin training. Employees and prospective employees who do not meet the established criteria for the HSQ must have their form reviewed by a physician or other qualified medical provider (i.e. nurse practitioner, physician's assistant, etc.) prior to any preparatory physical fitness training for or taking any level of the WCT. **If one box in section A or two boxes in section B** of the HSQ are marked, the employee or prospective employee does not meet the established HSQ criteria.

**2. Use of designated physicians or other qualified medical providers.** For employees requiring a medical exam, units may designate a physician or other qualified medical provider, or offer employees and prospective employees the option of seeing a physician or other qualified medical provider of their choice. Units may elect to contract with physicians or other qualified medical providers to perform examinations when a large number of employees need to be examined at one time. However, if units designate a physician or other qualified medical provider to conduct medical exams, they must offer the employee or prospective employee the opportunity to provide supplemental medical information to the Agency-designated physician or qualified medical provider. Also, for prospective employees, it may be necessary to offer the option of using their own physician or qualified medical provider if they are not from the local area and need to have the physical before reporting for work.



**3. Payment for physical examinations.** Consistent with direction in Title 5, Code of Federal Regulations, parts 339.302-304, when the agency requires a physical examination, it must pay for the costs of that examination. However, if the Forest Service offers a routine examination and the employee or prospective employee chooses to supplement the examination with information from their personal physician or medical provider, the Forest Service does not have to pay for such supplemental medical examination. Additional guidance about the scope of authorized examination and payments is included in the Implementation Guide.

**4. Sample documents for use if physical examination required.** When physical examinations are required, employees shall provide the physician or medical provider with: a) their completed HSQ; b) the appropriate Certificate of Medical Examination (Standard Form 78) for the level of fitness required; c) a copy of the “The Pack Test” brochure (FS-617) that describes the physical requirements of the fitness training, test and work associated with various wildland firefighting positions; and d) a letter to the physician outlining procedures and requirements. Also an envelope pre-addressed to the unit Servicing Human Resource Office (SHRO) must be included for the physician’s approval documentation so that the individual may take the WCT immediately upon employment. Sample letters to be provided to the employee and the physician or qualified medical provider are enclosed, as are copies of all of the documents listed. These documents are posted on the Internet at [http://www.fs.fed.us/fire/safety/wct/wct\\_index.html](http://www.fs.fed.us/fire/safety/wct/wct_index.html).

**5. Special instructions pertaining to new employees.** New employees should receive the pre-employment letter at least 4 weeks prior to the WCT testing date. All documents described in item 6 will be included with the confirmation letter. All procedures specified in the Implementation Guide under Section 2, **Prospective Employees**, must be followed.

**6. Recordkeeping.** Results of physical examinations must be returned to the employing unit and be made available to the WCT Administrator with the physician’s signed and dated authorization prior to individuals being allowed to participate in physical training for the WCT on official time or taking the WCT. Once the WCT is complete, the completed HSQ and medical forms must be maintained by the SHRO as official medical records in accordance with instructions in Title 5, Code of Federal Regulations 293, subpart E.

**7. Failure to pass the physical exam and/or failure to pass the WCT.** Temporary employees may be terminated effective the next day for failure to pass the physical exam or WCT test, a condition of employment. A second chance may be provided at the discretion of management. Also, generally, permanent employees whose positions require that they pass the WCT but cannot pass it shall be given three chances to pass it before permanent action is initiated to address their fitness limitations. Likewise, for those permanent employees who cannot pass the physical examination to take the WCT, permanent action will generally be initiated to address their fitness limitations. For any level of the WCT, permanent and temporary personnel who do not perform firefighter assignments as a recurring part of their positions, but who are authorized to perform such duties (i.e. as a part of the “militia”), may be retested as many times as management deems appropriate.

**8. Physical examinations for AD employees.** AD employees must meet HSQ requirements prior to taking the WCT, or present a release from a Physician or a qualified medical provider. The Forest Service is not responsible for AD medical exam costs. Medical examinations may be paid for if the position is of a critical nature, is in the best interests of the agency, and the Forest Service determines to proceed with the hiring. Paying for medical exams is consistent with direction in the Regional Administratively Determined Pay Plan. However, the AD should not be in a hired status during the exam. The examination cost should be charged to the P-code for AD training assigned to your Region by the National Fire Finance Office in Boise.

Please note that this policy is for Forest Service administered tests only and does not apply to contractors who are responsible for evaluating and testing their employees.

If you have any questions about any of the Human Resources issues, contact Joy Thomas (703) 605-0861. If you have any questions about Fire program guidance, contact Billy Terry (202) 205-1488.

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Enclosures

cc: Billy Terry, William R Dougan, Mary Fletcher, Ed Hollenshead, Dick King, Joy R Thomas